



Interview Summary: Paul Thompson, Catherine Poulin, and Lorenzo Ieraci, Public Services and Procurement Canada

This witness summary should be read in conjunction with Public Services and Procurement Canada (“**PSPC**”)’s Institutional Report.

The witnesses were interviewed in a panel format by Shantona Chaudhury, Eric Brousseau, Sajeda Hedaraly, and Alexandra Heine on August 22, 2022. Questions about this summary should be directed to Sajeda Hedaraly.

Text contained in [square brackets] are explanatory notes provided by Commission Counsel to assist the reader.

Background

PSPC is a major landowner for the federal government and is the custodian of a large number of buildings across the country, including over 200 buildings and parcels of land in the National Capital Region. PSPC is also the procurement authority for other federal departments, acting as their central purchasing agent.

Minister Filomena Tassi presided over the department at the time of the events. Minister Tassi was interviewed separately from the Department. The present interview should be read alongside the summary of Minister Tassi’s interview and PSPC’s institutional report.

Mr. Paul Thompson is the Deputy Minister of PSPC. He has a full breadth of responsibility for the department and oversees all of its branches.

Ms. Catherine Poulin is the acting Assistant Deputy Minister for Departmental Oversight. PSPC’s Departmental Oversight Branch (“**DOB**”) oversees all aspects of departmental security and emergency management. Ms. Poulin is notably responsible for the oversight of PSPC’s Emergency Operations Center (“**EOC**”).

Mr. Lorenzo Ieraci is the Assistant Deputy Minister for the Policy, Planning, and Communications Branch. At the time of the events, Mr. Lorenzo was the Associate Assistant Deputy Minister of Procurement, where his role was to oversee procurement activities for other federal departments.

Organization of PSPC’s Emergency Response

PSPC usually plays a role in the preparation for major events when it receives a request from other departments, from law enforcement agencies, or from cities. The department has a playbook that includes, for example, crowd control measures or installation of fencing, in collaboration or at the direction of law enforcement. During Canada Day, for example, PSPC will fence the Centennial Flame on Parliament Hill.



PSPC's response to the protests was organized through the Departmental Emergency Operations Center (the "**DEOC**"), which is a part of the DOB. The DEOC is activated any time there is a major event. Here, it was activated on January 28, 2022. PSPC's Departmental Crisis Management Team (the "**DCMT**") brought together the Directors General of all the branches involved in the response.

PSPC was on the receiving end of intelligence and information from the broader community. PSPC had a representative at the National Capital Region Command Centre (the "**NCRCC**") at all times. [The NCRCC is a planning cell that included representatives from all relevant levels of government and law enforcement agencies.] The PSPC representative would obtain information via the NCRCC and share it with the DEOC. The PSPC representative at the NCRCC was an employee from the Security Management Sector. The role was filled by multiple people on a rotating basis because it was 24/7. These PSPC team members provided a daily report to the Deputy Minister and Assistant Deputy Ministers.

The DEOC sent a daily report to various senior departmental officials at PSPC. In addition to reports from DEOC, senior officials received information from PSPC's Science and Parliamentary Infrastructure Branch ("**SPIB**"), which is responsible for the Parliamentary Precinct (among other areas), and from its Real Property Services Branch ("**RPS**"), which is responsible for many government assets, notably bridges and the judicial precinct.

Mr. Thompson regularly briefed Minister Tassi to keep her updated on the protests.

Jurisdiction

PSPC is the steward of the parliamentary precinct, judicial precinct, and other buildings in the National Capital Region (the "**NCR**").¹ PSPS has responsibility for the stewardship of the assets. This means that PSPC is responsible for renovations and repairs and for the safety of employees in these areas. The Parliamentary Precinct has expanded in the last few years to address Parliament requirements. Notably, the Parliamentary Precinct does not include Wellington Street. Historically, Wellington Street served as a border for the Parliamentary Precinct: it now runs directly through the middle of the Precinct. Fifty per cent of Parliamentarians will be permanently located in PSPC-owned buildings on the south side of Wellington Street.

The police of local jurisdiction is responsible for the enforcement of provincial and federal laws on PSPC land. Depending on the area, the Parliamentary Protective Service (the

¹ See blue and orange portions of the map of the National Capital Region, **PB.CAN.00000478**. PSPC is also responsible for the Senate of Canada, not depicted on the map. The green portions of the map are under the responsibility of the National Capital Commission and the purple portions of the map are under the responsibility of Parks Canada. The orange portion of the map depicts the judicial precinct.



“PPS”), the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (the “RCMP”), or the Ottawa Police Service (the “OPS”) may be responsible for security and/or be the police of jurisdiction on PSPC land. Some events might also involve other police forces, such as the Ontario Provincial Police, the Sûreté du Québec or the Service de police de la Ville de Gatineau. The presence of a PSPC representative at the NCRCC ensured timely and coordinated support to law enforcement agencies when necessary. During the protests, the OPS led the NCRCC.

The OPS is notably the law enforcement agency of jurisdiction for the National War Memorial.² PSPC currently has very clear responsibility for the care and maintenance of the National War memorial as owner and custodian. Jurisdiction over the National War Memorial is an active area of conversation and potential reform.

PSPC is also responsible for the stewardship of three bridges in the NCR: the Royal Alexandra Interprovincial Bridge, the Chaudière Crossing, and the Macdonald-Cartier Bridge.

Pre-Arrival of the Convoy Intelligence

PSPC’s main source of information before and during the protests was the NCRCC. Much of the information it obtained was open source information, notably from social media and the OPS.

On January 24, 2022, the DEOC entered into “monitoring” status, and on January 28, 2022, PSPC activated the DEOC.

PSPC’s Role and Responsibilities before and during the Protests in Ottawa

Initially, PSPC’s main concern was continuity of business; that its operations could continue and that its members could safely get in and out of their work sites. Mr. Thompson explained that PSPC’s role in relation to the protests was to respond to requests and to ensure its readiness to respond. For example, PSPC would consider what would happen if more fencing, than was available, was needed by its partners.

PSPC received a number of operational and procurement requests before and during the protests from other federal departments and from the OPS. Most of these requests concerned jersey barriers and fencing. [Jersey barriers are concrete barriers used to block the passage of vehicles.] PSPC also assisted the RCMP with the procurement of accommodations for its members. PSPC also received assistance requests from the Parliamentary Protective Service (“PPS”).

² Document “QA + Statement – War Memorial – MINO APPROVED”,
SSM.CAN.00000237.



Specific Requests for Assistance

On January 26, 2022, PSPC received a request for assistance from the PPS and put in place protective fencing and crowd control measures in locations including Parliament Hill and around the Senate. Over the next few days, PSPC fenced parts of the judicial precinct.

At the beginning of the protests, at the NCRCC's request, PSPC identified areas that could be used for overflow parking should it be necessary. The area at 1500 Bronson St. was notably offered by PSPC. To the witnesses' knowledge, this area was never used for overflow parking, although there was an encampment set up there [by protesters]. The OPS eventually removed these trucks and PSPC put up jersey barriers.

On January 29, 2022, PSPC installed jersey barriers around the National War Memorial. On February 3, 2022, following a formal request by the City of Ottawa and the OPS through the NCRCC, and after consulting Veterans Affairs Canada, PSPC installed fencing around the National War Memorial, in collaboration with the National Capital Commission (the "**NCC**"). This request followed disrespectful behavior that had occurred at that site. Two days later, PSPC fenced the Korean War Monument and the National Aboriginal Veterans Monument in collaboration with the NCC and Veterans Affairs Canada. PSPC also installed additional fencing at the perimeter of Confederation Park. Fences around the National War Memorial were taken down by the protesters the following weekend. The NCRCC decided not to put the fences back up for safety reasons, i.e. to avoid the possibility of their weaponization by protesters.

On February 6, 2022, PSPC installed jersey barriers along Tunney's Pasture in order to prohibit Convoy vehicles from parking there.

On February 11, 2022, PSPC installed jersey barriers at the parking area of the RA Centre, an area for which PSPC is the landowner but which contains a community center. The barriers were installed on Riverside Drive between Bank St. and Bronson St.

On February 17, 2022, the RCMP requested PSPC's assistance with fencing downtown.

Tow Trucks

PSPC does not own any tow trucks, but had such a request been made by another department, such as Transport Canada or the RCMP, the procurement of tow trucks would have fallen within PSPC's responsibilities, if the value of the request was sufficient to trigger PSPC's procurement role. The monetary threshold above which PSPC must conduct procurement on behalf of a federal department or agency varies depending on whether competitive or non-competitive limits apply. Usually, competitive limits apply and involve a tender process. Non-competitive limits – which do not involve an open tendering process – apply in specific circumstances, including emergencies.



PSPC did not receive any requests for tow trucks or tow truck services during the protests. Although PSPC received no procurement requests for tow trucks, it did some exploratory work in case such request(s) were made. PSPC did not have much experience with tow truck procurement before the protests. In collaboration with Transport Canada, PSPC prepared a Tow Truck Strategy enumerating a number of different approaches that could be used, all with the aim of removing large trucks from Ottawa. These strategies ranged from encouraging drivers to voluntary drive away to forcibly removing them. An employee of PSPC may have sought indicative rates from tow truck industry companies for information purposes. However, the tow truck strategy was never actioned as PSPC was never asked to procure tow trucks or related services.

Ports of Entry

PSPC has a standing relationship with the Canada Border Services Agency (“**CBSA**”), as with other federal departments. CBSA might have required barriers at a port of entry in Ontario during the protests but this did not ultimately materialize into a request to PSPC.

Bridges

PSPC has the authority to close the bridges within its jurisdiction. Early in the protests, PSPC monitored the convoys to ensure that load restrictions on bridges were not put at risk. PSPC later exercised its authority to close the Alexandra Bridge and the Macdonald-Cartier Bridge in conjunction with other agencies.

Provinces

PSPC had meetings with its counterparts in Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario; provinces that were facing protests. The goal of these meetings was to exchange information and ensure that different levels of government did not work at cross-purposes, as they might be looking to procure the same goods or services. Alberta, which was in an exploratory phase for procurement, notably flagged some goods and services that it was considering obtaining, including tow trucks. PSPC ultimately received no procurement requests from provinces.

Ontario Provincial Police

PSPC will sometimes provide support for event planning to the OPP, when the OPP engages them. PSPC did not specifically engage with the OPP with respect to the protests, save insofar as the OPP was working together with the various law enforcement agencies involved.

Private businesses

PSPC received no requests from private businesses during the protests. The witnesses did note that some businesses on Sparks Street are tenants of PSPC properties and that the department was aware of the concerns of downtown merchants during the protests.



The Invocation of the *Emergencies Act*

PSPC received no specific authorities under the *Emergencies Act*. PSPC initiated some exploratory work to evaluate how it could support others, but received no external request for assistance in relation to the *Emergencies Act*.

As noted above, PSPC did receive a high volume of requests for enforcement action, notably for fencing and jersey barriers in Ottawa, after the invocation of the *Emergencies Act*.

Concluding Thoughts

PSPC engaged in exploratory work and planning for the protests, and was prepared for requests that were not ultimately made.

PSPC is involved in two areas where jurisdiction is under consideration: the Parliamentary Precinct and the National War Memorial.